BOB CROW R.I.P. by Alexander Baron

infotextmanuscripts.org/djetc/av-bob-crow.html

Crow was a Londoner born and bred, and was always recognisable as such.

The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers was formed only in 1990, by the merger of the National Union of Railwaymen and the National Union of Seamen; its first leader was Scotsman Jimmy Knapp who died in August 2001. The following February, Bob Crow replaced Knapp when the RMT membership elected him General Secretary; he had been Assistant General Secretary since 1991.

Crow had been active in politics since his youth, joining both the Communist Party of Great Britain and then the Communist Party of Britain before aligning himself with socialist politics. Like many of his kind though it is probably wrong to style him either a communist or a socialist; he was simply a passionate advocate for the livelihood of the working class, and especially of his own members. And, at a time when trade union power has dwindled to a shadow of its former self, he was spectacularly successful.

The RMT has closed its office today, and has asked the media “to respect the privacy of Bob’s friends and family at this difficult and distressing time”.

While at just 52 Bob Crow is gone far too soon and will be sadly missed, the big question is can he be replaced? At this time, not only the railways but the entire public transport system is being systematically pillaged. The franchised railway companies are being heavily subsidised by the public purse at the same time commuters are being subjected to Draconian fare increases year in, year out.

In the capital especially, the transport system is being run not for the benefit of the public – commuters, shoppers and tourists – but for the benefit and convenience of an entity called Transport For London. Regular tickets are being phased out on buses so if you don't have a prepaid ticket or card – tough. On the Underground, ticket offices are being closed, staff reduced, and undoubtedly safety is being compromised.

Those holding the purse strings are determined to press on with this vandalism, and Bob Crow was determined to stop them. It remains to be seen if the RMT can find someone of his calibre to take up the cudgels and perhaps limit if not stop the carnage.

Robert Crow, born Shadwell, London, June 13, 1961; died Leytonstone, London, March 11, 2014.

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